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KAZAKHSTAN

CASE STUDY

University Focuses on Academic Quality

USAID training provides a university with tools to improve its academic programs



University representatives at the B&EE workshop in September 2005.
Photo: B&EE

Using the information received at a quality assurance workshop, organized by the USAID Business and Economic Education Project, West Kazakhstan Agro-Technical University develops and conducts a comprehensive survey to evaluate and improve its programs.

Challenge

Parents often question, "How do I know if my son or daughter will receive a good education at this university?" Employers wonder, "How can I tell that this job applicant received a quality education from his or her university?" Universities themselves ask, "How do we know if our graduates have accumulated sufficient knowledge and skills for the market?"

Initiative

To help universities find answers to such questions, USAID's Business and Economic Education Project (B&EE), implemented by Carana, invited university representatives to the "Quality Assurance: Academic Quality Self Evaluation" workshop in September 2005. Professor T.K. Kuangalieyeva from West-Kazakhstan Agro-Technical University was one of the many participants in the regional workshop. "After the workshop I worked closely with the Regional Academic Quality Evaluation Center and the Monitoring and Evaluation Department to develop a set of guidelines and detailed questionnaires to assess university administrators, faculty,

students, and employers. Next, we designed a survey for each category of evaluation. It took a lot of effort and time, but it was well worth it," said T. Kuangalieyeva.

Results

The survey interviewed 50 respondents, including administrators, deans, department heads, and chairpersons of various schools. It reviewed such areas as education and instruction quality, student attendance and preparation of homework, and the job market for university graduates. Of the 30 assessed instructors, only 27% were found to use audiovisual teaching aids effectively; 14% of instructors make no attempt to answer all the questions raised by students; and 6% do not encourage class discussions. Of the interviewed 13 medium and large companies in West Kazakhstan Oblast, 53% were found to recruit staff through announcements in local newspapers; 46% directly from universities; 23% through recruiting agencies; colleagues, and other sources; and 15% through company's own web site. Responding to a question about the quality of education at the West-Kazakhstan Agro-Technical University, 15.4% respondents rated the level of students' preparation above average, 76.9% felt it was good, and 7.7% deemed it to be below average.

The survey results enabled university faculty and administrators to reexamine and modify several academic programs and curricula to better reflect the need of region's businesses.